

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) today welcomed a “special review” by the State Department inspector general of the department’s handling of a controversial Tar Sands oil pipeline.

Sanders and Welch led members of Congress who last Oct. 26 asked Deputy Inspector General Harold W. Geisel to investigate whether conflicts of interest tainted the process for reviewing a proposed crude oil pipeline from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico.

Sanders said, “I appreciate the inspector general’s responsiveness to our request and the willingness to treat this important matter, and the allegations of conflicts of interest, with the seriousness it deserves. This is a critically important issue for our environment and the energy future of our country. At a time when all credible scientific evidence and opinion indicate that we are losing the battle against global warming, it is imperative that we have objective environmental assessments of major carbon-dependent energy projects.

Welch said, “I am pleased that the inspector general will shine the late of day on the State Department’s conclusion that the Keystone XL pipeline will not harm the environment. This unprecedented project will carry 900,000 barrels of tar sands oil nearly 2,000 miles every day. The U.S. pipeline system was not designed for it and safety regulations were not written with massive projects like this in mind. The American people have a right to know how the State Department reached its conclusion. This investigation is a step in the right direction.”

Sanders and Welch also had asked the White House to withhold any decision on the project until the inspector general’s investigation is completed, made public and evaluated. “I once again urge President Obama to defer any decision on the pipeline until the State Department investigation has been completed,” the senator reiterated today.

TransCanada, the company proposing the Keystone XL pipeline project, reportedly was allowed to screen private firms competing to perform an environmental impact study on the pipeline. Cardno Entrix, the politically-connected firm ultimately selected to conduct the environmental impact study, had significant financial ties to TransCanada.

The 1,700-mile pipeline would carry more than half a million barrels of oil a day from Canada's tar sands to refineries in Texas. The State Department is reviewing the proposal because the pipeline would cross the international border between the United States and Canada.

To read the inspector general's letter to Sen. Sanders and Rep. Welch, click [here](#) .

To read inspector general's memorandum, click [here](#) .